

Honorable Chairman Cardin,

Honorable Co-Chairman Cohen,

Distinguished Members of the Helsinki Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today in my capacity as the OSCE Chairman-in-Office. We highly value and greatly appreciate your leadership and commitment in advancing the principles of the Organization. I am particularly looking forward to working closely with you on fulfilling the OSCE mandate and its important mission.

Allow me to open with a personal remark. When the CSCE Final Document was signed in Helsinki – back in 1975, I was a student at the University of Lodz. Poland was a country subjugated by the USSR. The Iron Curtain seemed to divide the continent permanently.

However, the final document signed in Helsinki inspired people throughout the Communist Block. Despite repressions, there were not afraid to follow the ideals of freedom and to defend human and civil rights.

There were not many of them and they risked a lot.

In my home country, Poland, the Workers' Defense Committee (KOR) was established, as well as the Movement for the Defense of Human and Citizen's Rights.

It openly set as its objective the pressuring the authorities of the Communist Poland to comply with the provisions of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In neighboring Czechoslovakia, the Charter 77 movement was founded and the Prague Appeal was published.

The vision of Europe as a common area of peace and freedom was developed.

At that time these were dreams, which required civil courage to follow them. But so it is with the great things of this world that there are always few to begin with, and the task seems difficult.

When I was helping to establish the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s, I had a conviction that the Movement is only a branch of the community of free people, that saw no walls, no curtains, and no borders.

The same conviction was then shared by 10 million of Poles who joined Solidarność.

At the time, I could not have imagined that 40 years later, already as foreign minister of a free Poland and the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, I would be appearing in Washington before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

I am now of a similar age to the first Chairman of the Commission, Dante Fascell, who assumed that position nearly 45 years ago.

Chairman Fascell was a man of action: he and his friend decided to join National Guard when Hitler and Stalin invaded Poland in 1939, giving a start to World War Two.

He was also a man of principles - a sincere anti-communist but at the same time a politician aware that military force alone cannot solve the problems of this world.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Helsinki Commission,

I am honored to visit you here, but I do not bring you good news.

The drums of war are heard again in Europe.

My intention for today's meeting was to present Poland's priorities for its Chairmanship, which cover all aspects of the OSCE agenda.

However, I must start with the developments concerning a growing threat to Ukraine, which are deeply alarming.

We are in a critical moment for European and global security and we should talk about the role of the OSCE in addressing the ongoing tensions.

As a matter of fact, the risk of a major war in Europe is now greater than has been anytime in the last 30 years.

This is not just rhetorical figure.

We need to be aware that any escalation of the conflict in or around Ukraine would not only bring human suffering, but would also bring about profound political, strategic, economic and military consequences.

Once war is unleashed, nobody can be foresee its outcome.

The situation can spiral out of control very quickly and push whole Europe into a massive, multidimensional security crisis, with suffering of millions on the scale unseen since the World War Two.

But the stakes couldn't be higher. Europeans and our allies in North America are facing a threat to the very principles of the security system which the CSCE and OSCE had been designed to underpin and promote. European security architecture as we know it could quickly descend into chaos.

If this attempt succeeds, a threat of force and the use of force can gradually become a new standard in international politics. In the past half century, the number of interstate arm conflicts dropped down significantly.

If we allow the return of war of aggression into the foreign policy toolbox of states, the interstate conflict can become a norm again, and the rules-based international order

- established with a great deal of effort by the greatest personalities of humankind, from Woodrow Wilson to Mikhail Gorbachev, from Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King to Nelson Mandela, from Andrei Sakharov to Vaclav Havel and my great compatriot Pope John Paul the Second, as well as the former and present members of the Congressional Helsinki Commission - **will be lost.**

The order they helped to build can be destroyed and replaced by another order, based on one contradicting their beliefs principle of the might-makes-right!

Violation of the rules enshrined in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, Paris Charter for New Europe and other fundamental documents would have detrimental impact not only in the Euro-Atlantic area, but also globally.

I cannot say it strongly enough: the consequences of erosion of peace in Europe would go beyond the old Continent. The desire to redraw maps,

and expanse by territorial grabs is becoming widespread around the world.

If we fail to defend peace in Europe, the aggressors around the world would unite in using force against less powerful neighbors or rivals, and the conventional warfare could easily escalate to the nuclear level.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Helsinki Commission,

The OSCE can and should step up to the challenge and this Commission's support is of the essence. Since the mid-1970 the CSCE, and later the OSCE has become a pillar of Euro-Atlantic security and stability.

It brought stability to millions of people living from Vancouver to Vladivostok.

It offered mechanisms of arms control, transparency and predictability, and helped ease tensions among states.

It also linked the security of states to security and rights of the individuals. **At least four generations, from our parents to our grand-children have benefited from this stability. It is our duty to protect it for future generations.**

The United States and Helsinki Commission played a fundamental role in transforming OSCE into a pillar of our collective security.

As members of this Commission, you understand that the security on both sides of the Atlantic is closely interlinked, and that the U.S. is an indispensable part of European security order.

I greatly appreciate your support, which is a visible manifestation of indivisibility of our security in the Euro-Atlantic area.

I am sure that together we can find the way out of any crisis.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Helsinki Commission,

Against this backdrop, Poland wants to act diligently and innovatively in pursuit of its OSCE agenda.

Mindful of our common principles and values, we want to use existing instruments and also create frameworks that will allow to ease tensions,

improve the climate of cooperation, and return to “Helsinki culture” of resolving problems.

To this end, I have proposed an initiative to start a **dedicated, informal process within the OSCE which aims to reinvigorate the European security dialogue.**

We would focus on strengthening a broad set of confidence and security-building measures to cover such areas like military transparency, risk reduction, incident prevention, and non-military aspects of security.

As part of the process I am going to invite the member states for a **dialogue on the relationship between the main principles related to the political-military aspects of European security**, as developed within the OSCE, and on the application of these principles in the current situation.

There is a need to compare notes about understanding of the **concepts of comprehensive security, indivisibility of security, and peaceful coexistence** and their relationship with other OSCE principles, such as the freedom of adherence to alliances.

I believe that this is an enormous opportunity for the OSCE to show its relevance and effectiveness in the 21st century.

The modalities of this initiative is now being discussed in Vienna and I call on all partners to engage in this process in good faith.

We greatly appreciate strong support and commitment to this initiative from the U.S. government. At the same time I hope this effort will be well-received by members of the U.S. Congress.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Helsinki Commission,

All the ongoing conflicts in the OSCE area present serious challenges to European security. Very often they have resulted from flagrant violations of international law and OSCE principles and commitments.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict remains the most blatant example of violations of our commonly agreed principles, and therefore I will focus on that crisis.

The situation in Eastern Ukraine deserves our constant attention and care. Any sustainable, political solution must fully respect sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine.

We strongly support the political settlement process undertaken in the Normandy format and I'm glad we've seen some positive signals over the last few days. As the OSCE Chair, Poland will facilitate further talks between Ukraine and Russia within the Trilateral Contact Group.

But the negotiations cannot be reduced to mere politics alone. As I mentioned in Vienna few weeks ago, behind any protracted conflict there are people that suffer the most.

Therefore we will also spare no efforts that the prisoners' exchange based on the principle "all for all" finally takes place, as provided in the Minsk Agreements, and the humanitarian situation in the conflict areas is improved.

Of course, we are aware that the reality does not always reflect our expectations, and that the resolution to the conflict will not come overnight.

Therefore, it is of crucial importance that the security situation in Donbas is conducive for further dialogue. In this respect, Poland will continue efforts of the previous OSCE chairwomanship to facilitate implementation and monitoring the ceasefire agreement in Donbas, which requires that the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine is strengthened and its mandate systematically extended.

The most urgent challenge is to ensure that SMM monitors have unrestricted and unconditional access throughout Ukraine. We will spare no efforts to facilitate the extension of the SMM mandate beyond March 31.

We deeply regret Russian decision not to support the extension of the mandate of another OSCE Observer Mission at the Russian checkpoints of Gukovo and Donetsk at the border with Ukraine, which was an important confidence-building measure. I am determined to work with all parties involved to hammered out working solution of the problem.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

The economic and environmental aspects will remain crucial for the comprehensive concept of security in the OSCE area. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a detrimental impact on many aspects of our economic and social life. It is, therefore, only natural for our Chairmanship to focus on sharing experience and best practices in solving challenges related to the pandemic.

The same is true of the OSCE's possible role in advancing climate and energy policies that are key to the security and stability of the participating States. We can build on the premise that we all are interested in a just, effective, and sustainable energy transformation of our economies.

We will also focus on anti-corruption, promotion of investments, business, good governance, promotion of trade and transport, as well as human capital development.

The first in-depth discussion on these issues will take place soon in Vienna and will be followed by events organized in Poland.

Combating corruption is among the long-term goals of the OSCE. We fully support the activities of Ms. Anita Ramasastry, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Combating Corruption, and we look forward to cooperating with her.

I highly appreciate the Helsinki Commission record in adoption legislation introducing U.S sanctions against individuals violating human rights. All states should follow this example and codify the rule that no-one can profit economically from actions which breach basic OSCE commitments. This includes both companies and individuals.

The U.S. could lead the way in adopting such legislation.

I strongly encourage the Commission to extend this kind of legislation on those who side with aggressors and are making money on aggression by taking positions in leadership or boards of the companies controlled, directly or indirectly, by perpetrators of war of aggression, entities and individuals. These sanctions should also affect people of who engage in transactions with state-controlled companies run by the aggressor-state.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, let me stress the human-centered perspective that we will apply in daily operations of our Chairmanship.

I will continue advocating for promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, and democratic institutions in the OSCE area. In fact, since the very beginning of the democratic transition in Poland my country has always been active in this field, offering our support, assistance and sharing experience with other partners.

Only in the last year Poland offered a safe harbor for members of Belorussian democratic opposition.

We should not forget about more than 1000 political prisoners in Belarus. This is indeed heartbreaking – for all of us, thousands of families are affected. We should keep Belarus on the agenda.

As the host country of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, we will maintain close cooperation with OSCE autonomous institutions, firmly supporting their independent mandates.

We want to dedicate more attention to the humanitarian aspects in the zones of conflict, including in particular the situation of children and persons with disabilities.

I would also like to stress the necessity of the protection of women's rights, in countries not only ravaged by war, but also in those societies in which oppression of women is still commonplace and socially acceptable.

Similarly, promotion of freedom of religion or belief will remain of pivotal importance for the Chair. We should not let violence, hatred, and discrimination become a new normal in our societies.

Let me remind you that it was my country that put forward a resolution establishing the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief, approved by the UN General Assembly in May 2019.

Let me also underline that Poland opposes any attempts to weaken the role and impact of the OSCE Human Dimension. As the OSCE Chair, Poland will spare no efforts to facilitate and support preparations for the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting that should take place in Warsaw in September and the beginning of October.

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Taking over the important role of the OSCE Chair I feel the burden of responsibility. Being fully aware of the challenges laying ahead of us, I also look to the opportunities that we can collectively use to improve the security environment around us.

And I am confident that we will successfully manage through the current problems together by showing our unity, cohesion and, resolve.

I believe, that the only way out of the current crisis is to firmly stick to the fundamental principles of the peaceful relation between states, as agreed in the UN Charter, the Helsinki Final Act, the Paris Charter and subsequent OSCE documents.

We must recommit to these principles, which we all have already endorsed and for long considered a guidance in our approach to building security in Europe.

Europe dreamed to be whole, free and at peace, we cannot allow to turn it instead into Europe divided, at despair and war.

Thank you very much for your attention. I am looking forward to you questions and comments.